

Men's Sheds Health and Well-being Survey

**“When I feel like I need refreshed and lifted up,
I know that twice a week my shed will be there waiting.”**

The growth of interest in men's sheds and the establishment of men's sheds in Scotland in recent years has been remarkable. The first charity registered men's shed in Scotland was formed in Westhill, Aberdeenshire in 2013. This was followed by the opening of both the Macmerry Men's Shed in East Lothian and the Shed in Oban later that year. Four years on Age Scotland's Community Development Team is in contact with 101 sheds; some of these are established sheds, some are in development, some have a broader community agenda and are developing under the auspices of another organisation.

Every day Age Scotland hears from shedders about how much their shed means to them and how it positively affects their life. Over the past few months we have been asking shedders we are working with to tell us more about the difference being involved in their shed has made to their lives, and to help us record their experiences. In particular, we have been interested in finding out from shedders how their involvement in sheds has affected their health and well-being.

To help gather this information we compiled a Men's Sheds Health and Well-being Survey questionnaire. We consulted with shedders on the questions, and the scope and size of the questionnaire. Shedders recommended we provide different options for the completion of the survey such as through group discussions and 1:1 interview as well as shedders completing the questionnaire themselves on hard copy and via survey monkey.

As at 5th May 2017, 133 completed questionnaires have been returned to Age Scotland. Shedders in Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, East Lothian, Glasgow, Highland, South Lanarkshire, and the Scottish Borders have contributed to the study so far. Additionally, 8 sheds, 2 shed supporters and 30 individual shedders have contributed their insights and experiences through group discussions and more in-depth individual interviews. Their testimonies are published separately in **The Shed Effect: Stories from shedders in Scotland** (Age Scotland; May 2017).

This paper is a collation of the 133 responses to the Health and Well-being Survey. The responses indicate that sheds are having great impact on people's lives. The activities in the sheds are very important to shedders, and their achievements in setting up sheds and making them work are considerable. However, as the responses to the survey show, for many shedders it's the companionship, sense of purpose, learning opportunities, new friendships and support that comes from being involved in a shed that is most valued by shedders, and is making a positive impact on health and well-being.

Who responded to the health and well-being survey

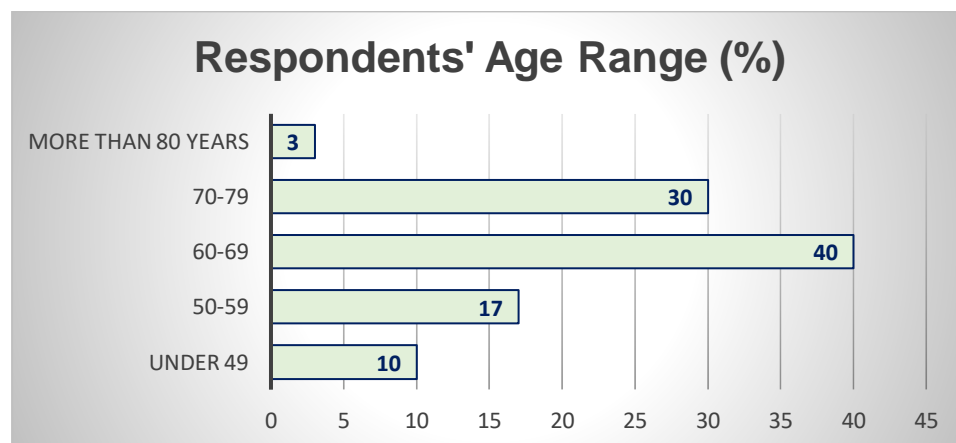
133 men's shedders responded to our survey. We began the survey by asking shedders how long they had been involved in their shed.

- 43% of survey respondents had been involved in their shed for more than 1 year
- 19% of survey respondents had been involved for 6-12 months;
- 38% of survey respondents are more recent shedders and had been involved in their shed for less than 6 months.

We asked shedders how frequently they are involved in activities relating to their shed.

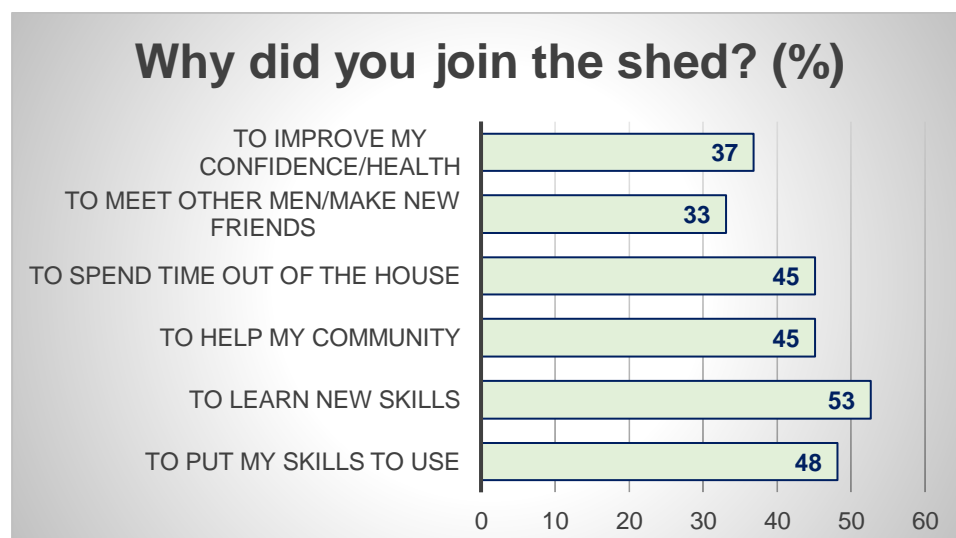
- 63% of survey respondents engage in shed activities 2 or 3 times per week
- 13% of survey respondents engage in shed activities once per week
- 8% of survey respondents engage in shed activities on a daily basis.

We asked shedders to tell us their age



73% of survey respondents were aged over 60 years.

We asked shedders why they joined the shed



53% joined the shed to learn new skills.

45% joined the shed to spend time out of the house.

NB Respondents were invited to tick all options that applied.

Key Findings

Shedders were invited to tell us what they get out of being involved in their shed by reading a series of statements and ticking the statement which best describes their situation. The statements were devised to link with the SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included.

The statement options were: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Not all respondents completed all questions. Many of our respondents provided further information and comment in relation to the questions. A selection of their comments have been included in this paper. Here's what the shedders told us:

a. I feel "at home" in the shed

58% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 35% of survey respondents agreed with this statement.

Selection of comments:

"As soon as I was introduced I was made to feel welcome by all without exception."

"Was lost after retiring. Met new people, have a laugh and just integrate in the local community."

"It's a good meeting place and working environment and has space in which to be busy. That's what I like because I would like to be busy at home but the shed is better equipped, friendly and warm."

"I barely see, have a hearing difficulty, other health problems but still mobile. I now feel part of a community."

Headline Findings

MEN'S SHEDS HEALTH AND WELL- BEING SURVEY

**93% of shedders feel
"at home" in their shed**

**87% of shedders are
satisfied with health and
safety in their shed**

b. I am satisfied with the level of health and safety in the shed

39% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 48% of survey respondents agreed with this statement.

Selection of comments

"Equipment has been inspected and those in charge have been on health and safety courses."

"Not allowed to use equipment until been shown."

"Rules and regulations are maintained very strictly. Too many old hands would not allow the misuse of tools etc."

"We have acquired a defibrillator for peace of mind."

c. I have made good friends in the shed

56% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 38% of survey respondents agreed with this statement.

Selection of comments

“We feel like we’ve known each other for years now and we have good fun together and a bit of banter.”

“Meeting and making new friends is a great help at my age.”

“I really enjoy the skills mix, different personalities and the ‘banter’ the shed has to offer.”

“The friendship of the shed makes you feel at ease to talk about anything and you feel better within yourself for doing so.”

“I have made around 22 new friends who I would never have met but for the men’s shed.”

d. I feel supported by my fellow shedders

20% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 56% of survey respondents agreed with this statement.

Selection of comments

“All I need to do is ask and help is there.”

“There is a wide cross section of skills including very experienced people that I can draw on.”

“If in doubt about how to tackle or resolve any problems, you just have to ask, and get pointed in the right way and [to the right] person.”

“There is always someone willing to hold and lend a hand.”

e. I feel my physical health has improved as a result of being involved in the shed

20% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 56% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 14% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

“I am able to move easier but still have lots of joint pains.”

“I often walk to the men’s shed (about 2 miles).”

“It has given me the incentive to get up and be involved in something else therefore my physical health has improved.”

“Something to do other than sitting around.”

Headline Findings

**MEN’S SHEDS
HEALTH AND**

94% of shedders have made good friends in their shed

76% of shedders feel supported by their fellow shedders

76% of shedders say their physical health has improved as a result of being involved in their shed

- f. I am more active as a result of being involved in the shed

29% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 56% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 8% of respondents did not answer this question.

Selection of comments

"Helps me get out instead of sitting watching TV."

"Doing more things now than I used to do."

"Most days I would tend not to go out unless going to the shops."

- g. I feel my mental health has improved as a result of being involved in the shed

20% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 59% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 12% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

"The shed helps me to keep sane."

"Now off anti-depressants as I feel happier in general, partly down to shed involvement."

"Less confrontational."

"I am more alert, less stressed and friends and family claim to see a difference in me."

"As I become more involved in the shed, new projects etc I get the old grey matter stirred and become intrigued with new challenges."

"If I did not attend the shed it could be weeks before I spoke to anyone."

- h. As a result of joining the shed I am doing things I enjoy

49% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 42% of survey respondents agreed with this statement.

Selection of comments

"Carpentry has always been an ambition of mine and the shed has allowed that to happen."

"Getting involved in growing the shed is exciting."

"Remembering old skills I had."

"I can make up my own mind what to do."

Headline Findings

**MEN'S SHEDS
HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING**

85% of shedders are more active as a result of being involved in their shed

79% of shedders say their mental health has improved as a result of their involvement in their shed

91% of shedders are doing things they enjoy as a result of joining their shed

- i. **Attending activities in the shed has made me feel happier**

20% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 59% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 12% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

“Good fun and treated well”

“Helped me adjust to retirement.”

“Yes, even sitting chatting and having a laugh makes me feel happier.”

“I no longer feel on my own or at a loose end. I enjoy being part of the ‘team’.”

- j. **I have learned new skills since being involved in the shed**

33% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 49% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 9% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

“I am trying new things, handling new tools, making different things than what I was used to in the past.”

“Particularly using equipment I’ve never used or owned myself eg a router.”

“As treasurer I’ve learnt about keeping accounts and using spreadsheets.”

- k. **I have been able to share and pass on my skills and knowledge with fellow shedders**

29% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 50% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 14% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

“I used to work in the construction industry and many of the things I learned there are still useful in other basic principles of DIY.”

“Teaching scroll saw.”

Headline Findings

**MEN’S SHEDS
HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING**

**79% of shedders feel
happier as result of
attending activities in
their shed**

**82% of shedders have
learned new skills
since being involved
in their shed**

**79% of respondents
have been able to
pass on their skills
and knowledge to
their fellow shedders**

- l. The projects I've been involved in in the shed have given me a sense of achievement**

40% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 44% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 15% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

"I am not alone in expressing pleasure and satisfaction after making something using newly learned skills."

"Looking forward to new challenges."

"I like to help people and this has allowed that."

"Setting up our shed has been a great achievement."

"I have been making guitars. Before coming to the shed I could not use a saw."

"I'm regularly telling guys 'you only achieve what you attempt'. This has been true for me too as I've often been delighted at the way a project has turned out when finished."

Headline Findings

**MEN'S SHEDS
HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING**

84% of shedders have gained a sense of achievement as a result of projects they have been involved in in their shed

82% of shedders are more confident as a result of their involvement in their shed

- m. I feel more confident as a result of involvement in the shed**

23% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 59% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 14% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Comments

"More confident with 'small talk' plus starting a conversation with a stranger."

"I'm getting out more."

"Speaking to more people."

"Definitely not frightened to tackle jobs big or small. Often consultation with other members gives you the required confidence to make it happen."

"After my wife passed away, I stopped working in my own shed, life was just going to get me food shopping and watching TV. Now I am working in my shed all the time and going out for lots of meals and going on holidays. I have been on my own for 10 years this year and the men's shed has helped me with friends. Life is getting good again or as good as it can be."

- n. I feel more involved in my local community as a result of taking part in the shed

33% of survey respondents strongly agreed with this statement; and, a further 53% of survey respondents agreed with this statement. 9% of respondents did not answer this question; several said it was too early in their shed experience to comment.

Selection of comments

“Helping others is giving me a sense of purpose.”

“Our shed is in a small town and we are steadily gaining recognition and respect among the community. I have met or come into contact with lots of folks that I would not have got to know otherwise.”

Headline Findings

MEN'S SHEDS HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

86% of shedders feel more involved in their local community as a result of their involvement in their shed

Acknowledgements

Age Scotland gratefully acknowledges the support of sheds and shedders across Scotland who generously shared their personal insights and experiences of men's sheds with us by taking part in this survey.

Age Scotland also appreciates funding support from The Robertson Trust and the Scottish Government Equality Budget. This funding has enabled Age Scotland to provide community development support and small grants assistance to men's sheds in Scotland.

“Attending the shed and doing things for and on behalf of the shed has become part of my regular routine. I look forward to going, feel challenged by new projects and the shed represents a fair slice of ‘I time’”.

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